REMARKS

Claims 11-18 are pending. Claims 11, 12, 15 and 18 have been amended. No new matter has been added.

Claims 12, 15 and 18 were objected to under 37 CFR 1.73(c), as being of improper dependent form for failing to further limit the subject matter of a previous claim. Claims 12, 15 and 18 have been amended to overcome this objection. Applicants respectfully request that this objection be withdrawn.

Claim 11 was rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention. This rejection is overcome by amendment. Applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 11 and 14-18 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Kumon et al., U.S. Patent 4,890,212. This rejection is respectfully overcome.

Kumon discloses a method for supplying several users from one energy source, wherein, during a turn-on phase, several users are supplied with limited feed current in a time-staggered manner, so that the energy source can be designed to be more cost-effective. However, the claims have been amended to clarify that the claimed checking function takes place during an operating phase as well as a turn-on phase (see page 4 of the specification). Further, with the aid of up-to-date feed current readings, the accuracy of the users connected to the energy source through the user connection line can be determined. This determination of accuracy is, in turn, performed both during the connection phase and during operation, wherein defective users may, for example, be disconnected from the energy source (referring to claim 13). If several defective users have been detected, they are reconnected, again in a time-staggered manner, within the scope of the method according to the invention, and are checked for correctness. Within the scope of the claimed method, it is important to ensure that the total available current is not exceeded. The claimed method guarantees that in the event of failure or if there are several defective users, the power

supply to the non-defective users can be ensured. Kumon fails to teach or suggest the features of claim 11. Claim 12 recites substantially the same features as claim 11 but differs in that users of a single group can be simultaneously connected, with the procedure of repeating the method for additional groups. A key feature is that the users are being monitored while in the operating phase, not just during the connection phase. The remaining claims are allowable at least due to their respective dependencies. Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claim 13 was rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kumon in view of Mooers, U.S. Patent 1,361,396. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 13 depends from claim 11. Since the features of claim 11 are not taught or suggested by either Kumon, Mooers, or a combination thereof, claim 13 is also allowable over the cited art. Thus, Applicants request that this rejection be withdrawn.

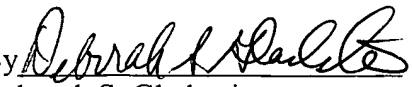
In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue. If it is determined that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at the number given below.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and

authorize the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 44912-2030500.

Dated: December 5, 2003

Respectfully submitted,

By 

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